

Khafaje and Tell Asmar

East of Baghdad, across the Tigris, in the plains watered by the Diala, where the highways of Elam, Persia and Assyria meet, new excavations were opened in 1930 by the Oriental Institute of Chicago under the direction of Prof. Henri Frankfort at Tell Asmar and at Khafaje. The first was the old city of Eshnunna, identified by the French consul H. Pognon in 1892. Both sites had become a mine for antiquities dealers of Baghdad. The Oriental Institute inaugurated more scientific methods, with brilliant results, continuing the excavations until 1937. Two more sites, Ischali and Tell Agrab were included in the Mesopotamian field, and still another expedition resumed the excavation of Khorsabad in Assyria, untouched since the days of Botta, Flandrin and Place. The monumental remains of the palace of Sargon are now in the Chicago Museum. In southern Mesopotamia the University of Chicago, thanks to a generous donation of Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (the Oriental Expedition Fund) in 1903, opened its first excavation at Bismaja (Adab) east of Fâra, under the direction of Edgar James Banks. After the First World War, improved methods and the experience gained at Kish, Ur and Uruk, contributed to the success of the Diala expedition. Level after level was exposed down to the virgin soil or at least to the water level, in historical sequence. Each main level borrows its name from the temple then existing: the Single, the Square, the Archaic Temple at Tell Asmar; again, the Recent, the Middle, the First Oval Temple, the First, the Second Sin Temple, etc., at Khafaje. The type of bricks, plano-convex or flat, square, oblong, was noted. Great stress was put on pottery, whether painted or not, and all the archaeological material was arranged in a new chronological order. The settlement does not apparently antedate the Jemdet-Nasr period. It flourished somewhat in the north, when the Sumerian art and culture illustrated by the royal tombs reached its zenith at Ur, and apparently preceded it in the so-called early dynastic period. This little-known period is characterized by a wealth of statues in the round of men and women in a wide variety of style and technique suggesting differences of date. Hoard after hoard, carefully packed away, was discovered under the floor of several sanctuaries, or built in the brickwork of the altars, or loose in the surrounding courts. They probably were the memorials or votive offerings of dignitaries and worshippers, buried in the sacred ground at the time of reconstruction. Two of them are even

claimed to be cult statues. No such hoards have ever been found before in Mesopotamia.

When, after seven years, the Oriental Institute stopped work at Khafaje, the site was handed over to the Joint Expedition of the University Museum and the American Schools of Oriental Research. Mr. Pierre Delougaz the architect, who had a long experience in this field, was appointed director. It was a fortunate choice, and as a reward for the workers of the eleventh hour, a new hoard of early dynastic statues soon came to light. It was buried below the floor of an old disused shrine, mistaken for a sculptor's workshop because of the many sculptured fragments lying about. These statuettes now form an important feature of the Babylonian Section of the University Museum, where are seen good examples of Sumerian art from the early dynastic period, through the ages of Sargon and Gudea, down to the Third Dynasty of Ur and the Isin-Larsa periods.

The men of Khafaje represent different types, as could be expected in a mixed population. The round, shorn heads of the Sumerians (*Figure 30*) contrast with the bearded, hairy, long-faced, long-nosed men of Kish (*Figure 31*) with braids of hair framing their beards. All have the upper body naked, all keep their hands clasped in the same respectful attitude. Their arms detached from the body, form a sharp angle at the elbow. The eyes are inlaid with shell and lapis, the eyebrows with bitumen. Hair and beard are painted black, adding colour and expression to the face. A faint smile sometimes illuminates the usually rigid features. Again kilts and skirts bespeak a mixed racial tradition. The Sumerians wore a long fleece-like woollen piece closing behind, with flocks disposed in tiers. The Kish man (*Figure 32*) preferred a plain cloth, with scalloped or looped fringe. Feminine headdress (*Figure 33*) knew the many arts of curls, locks, braids, ringlets and head-bands, and used them to advantage. Fable and mythology inspired decorative art. The human-faced bull became the fore-part of an arm-rest. An artificial beard was hung across the nose of a divine bull or cow.

Perforated stone plaques with scenes carved in relief are another type of monument frequently found in the early dynastic shrines. Such memorials probably were fixed against the walls by means of a peg driven through the hole. The reliefs may be disposed in two or three registers. Curiously enough, two fragmentary plaques (*Figure 34*), one



Figure 30. Alabaster statuette from Khafaje. Typical Sumerian, shaven and shorn, with hands clasped and wearing the flounced skirt. Eyes inlaid

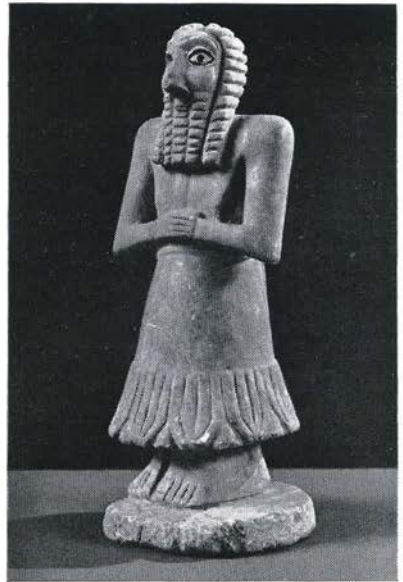


Figure 31. Alabaster statue from Khafaje, Akkadian style. Long locks and beard and fringed skirt. Eyes inlaid



Figure 32. Man's head of Akkadian style with long hair and beard. Alabaster statue from Khafaje



Figure 33. Female head with inlaid eyes. Alabaster statue from Khafaje, circa 2800 B.C.

from Ur, one from Khafaje, supplement each other, and restore to our eyes the whole scene. In the lower part, a two-wheeled Sumerian (?) chariot is led in state. All the minute details of the wheel, axle, rim, body covered with a leopard skin, splashboard, and quiver filled with weapons, curved pole and rein-ring, yoke resting on the neck and tied to the collars of the four animals of the team may be studied on the University Museum fragment. Groom, driver and servant precede or follow on foot. They wear long hair and beard and a leaf-like pleated kilt. On the Khafaje fragment are shown the enthroned king and queen enjoying a feast of wine with harp-music, while servants bring more provisions of food and drink. (cf. *The Royal Cemetery*, p. 376 and Pl. 181.) As for the animals of the team they are certainly not horses, but a breed from wild asses.



Figure 34. Perforated limestone plaque with scenes in relief: A feast with music; servants bringing offerings, wine, bull and the state chariot. Fragments from Ur and Khafaje